Fourteenth Loksabha

Session : 10
Date : 16-03-2007

Participants : Singh Dr. Akhilesh Prasad

Title: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Fod and Public Distribution made a statement regarding announcemnt of bonus for farmers growing wheat for the current rabi season.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): Madam, the Government have been concerned about the food security of the country and the need to increase productivity in agriculture. We have also been concerned about the deteriorating terms of trade in agriculture. It is our commitment that the farmers in this country are given a better deal to ensure their wellbeing and prosperity. Last year, we had no option to import wheat to meet the needs of Public Distribution System and also the demands of the open market.

The Minimum Support Price for wheat in 2000-01 was Rs. 580. It was Rs. 630 in 2004-05, an increase of Rs. 50 in four years.[r6]

When this UPA Government came to power, this short-sighted policy had started showing its impact on production. The wheat production had fallen to low levels of 68 million tonnes in 2004-05. The production rose marginally to 69.35 million tonnes in 2005-06. Last year the Minimum Support Price was Rs.650 over which we announced a bonus of Rs.50 per quintal. This year we followed it up with an increase in Minimum Support Price by 100 rupees making it Rs.750 per quintal. The farmers responded admirably and have increased the area under wheat and have also increased productivity. … (*Interruptions*)

सभापति महोदया : आपके ही मंत्री बोल रहे हैं। कृपया उनकी बात सुनें।

DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH: But for the unseasonal rain and hail storms, we would have benefited from a bumper crop.

Government recognizes this great effort. We are grateful to our farmers for this response. To give better returns to our farmers, the Government has decided to declare a bonus of Rs.100 per quintal for this Rabi season. This is in addition to the increase in Minimum Support Price announced already. This will mean that the farmers will get Rs.850 per quintal of wheat against Rs.700 last year.

I sincerely hope that our farmers will welcome this announcement whole-heartedly and contribute more to our procurement operations. I would like to assure the farmers that the Government will do everything possible to support them get better returns from their land.

The Government is also committed to ensure that there is no shortage of wheat in the country. To avoid any shortage in the country, the Government has also decided to permit duty free import of wheat till 31 December 2007.

The Government is committed to provide adequate food-grains to the poorer sections of society, particularly the below poverty line and AAY through the Public Distribution System. It has also been decided that the Government will import, if necessary, adequate quantities of wheat to meet the requirements of the Public Distribution System, and other welfare schemes like Mid-Day Meals, ICDS, other employment and nutrition programmes, etc. STC will be asked to take preparatory steps to import up to 3 million tons in case of need.

सभापति महोदया : मेरा विश्वास है कि सरकार प्रोक्योरमेंट के लिए भी हर जगह उतनी ही व्यवस्था करेगी।

डॉ. रामकृण कुसमरिया (खजुराहो) : किसानों के लिए आप यह रेट दे रहे हैं तो आयात के लिए आप क्या रेट रखेंगे?...(व्यवधान)

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record. Only the hon. Member, Shrimati Radhika Selvi will be recorded.

*(Interruptions) ... **

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* Not recorded.